

## WORLD TOPICS

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## Did Ben Barka's Kidnappers Seek His Explosive Files?

David Rousset

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*The Ben Barka Affair is the most tantalizing of crimes—a known kidnaping and presumed murder implicating the governments of both Morocco and France but lacking both corpse and satisfactory motive. Now, a noted French journalist offers the latter, at least. Writing in Paris' respected Le Figaro Littéraire, David Rousset suggests that Ben Barka came to grief not as leader of the Moroccan Left, but in a far broader and more sinister capacity.*

FIRST essential point: Ben Barka was active on two political planes, one Moroccan, the other international. Second point: Ben Barka's international responsibilities were at such a high level and of such a nature as to have profound repercussions on his national activity. Third point: Ben Barka was not just a political leader in the ordinary sense of the word—he was above all an administrator, a negotiator.

Let us start at the beginning. Exile made Ben Barka an international leader whose activities soon became

quite independent of the duties he continued to perform within his own party. The governments of Cairo and Damascus, among others, entrusted him with delicate missions of interest only to themselves.

Two dates are decisive: in April 1960, at Conakry, the Organization of Solidarity of the Afro-Asian peoples decided to create a Solidarity Fund. In 1963, at Moshi in Tanzania, the preparatory committee of the Tricontinental Conference was set up. A man with very special qualities was needed to occupy a post of central responsibility in the management of the Fund. After all, the money was being put up primarily by the U.S.S.R. and China; and since the conflict between these powers had already reached, in 1960, a virulent stage, it was going to be very difficult to win the confidence of both simultaneously. Much diplomacy would be needed. Both the Soviets and the Chinese would have to be sure of the convictions, capabilities and discretion of any candidate. Ben Barka was appointed to this post of vice-chairman, flanked by one Soviet and one Chinese, while the chairmanship was assumed by the brother of Sékou Touré, Ismaël Touré. The authority he had won in the Arab world must have been a great help to him. But he also had to have experience as an administrator, and both the will and political ability to bring the national movements of the Third World and the Communist Parties much closer together.

The essential work of the Fund was the management of money. A large share of the budget was used on propaganda and publications, and another part of it was used to support the Afro-Asian organizations and their activities. Some of these were clandestine, and their activities subversive and military. In order to succeed in this delicate task, Ben Barka had to know the truth about these organizations and their leaders. Money, after all, cannot be handed out indiscriminately. Ben Barka therefore possessed information of extraordinary value and bore very high-level responsibilities, especially if one considers that his sphere embraced the whole of Asia, the Middle East and Africa. For this reason, from 1960 onwards, his adversaries began to regard him as being on an entirely different level of importance from his colleagues in the leadership of the U.N.F.P. [National Union of Popular Forces]. He began to become intimately involved in major matters of world importance.



Ben Barka in Casablanca: "False names and hiding places."